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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ AND CORREA

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT RICHARD DOWNES  
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Presidents Hugo Chavez and Rafael Correa held a joint press conference to condemn Colombia's incursion into Ecuador and heap scorn on a wide range of people and issues. Chavez challenged Uribe to face the International Criminal Court alongside him and threatened to nationalize Colombian businesses. Correa stated that the OAS decision was welcome but did not close the case with Colombia. Chavez dominated the event using it to push his anti-Colombia/U.S. agenda. Unlike Chavez, Correa did not directly attack the United States. END SUMMARY

12. (SBU) Following a swing through the region to gather support against the Colombia's Uribe administration, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa met with Hugo Chavez on March 5. After their discussions the two leaders held a joint press conference where each spoke and then took questions from a pre-screened pool of friendly reporters.

#### WHAT CORREA SAID

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13. (SBU) Correa made it clear that, while he appreciated the OAS decision that Ecuador's territory had been violated, he would not be content until Colombia had received an "international condemnation" for breaching Ecuadorian sovereignty and added that Ecuador would "exhaust every diplomatic means" to see the aggressor condemned. Admitting that the situation between Ecuador and Colombia had changed since severing diplomatic relations, Correa warned that even an anti-drug crop duster on his side of the border would be considered "an act of war." He rejected Uribe's claim of links between the FARC and Ecuador as Colombia trying to switch "from accused to accuser." Correa deplored Uribe's conduct as deceitful and aggressive adding that he could not have relations with someone who has "lost all credibility." Correa went on to claim that Uribe was making a profit off the Colombian conflict. Unlike Chavez, Correa did not attack the United States directly.

#### WHAT CHAVEZ SAID

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14. (SBU) Chavez gave his "unconditional support" to Correa and the people of Ecuador. Claiming he had no interest in Colombian investments, he publicly ordered his ministers to "draw up a map" of Colombian businesses in Venezuela so he could see which to nationalize and how to divest BRV holdings in Colombian businesses. Championing peace, Chavez said the GOC could never beat the FARC, just as the guerrillas could not topple the GOC, adding that Uribe had a "psychotic obsession" with defeating the rebels. Referring to Colombia's threat to charge Chavez with genocide and

supporting terrorism in the International Criminal Court, Chavez challenged Uribe to face the ICC alongside him and predicted that "Uribe would be the guilty one." Not one to squander a media opportunity, Chavez blamed the United States for the attack on Ecuador as part of an imperialist plot to destabilize the region, accused former Defense Minister Baduel of meeting with Colombian oligarchs and generals in Bogota, denied his links to the FARC as "one of hundreds of lies" by Colombia and accused Uribe of turning Colombia into "another Israel."

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